LESSON 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE MEF AS A WARFIGHTER

We exist today because the American people expect their Marines to provide them a lean, ready and professional fighting force that guarantees success when committed. They have such a force now and are proud of it.

-- C. C. Krulak, USMC Commandant Commandant's Planning Guide

Introduction

Purpose

This lesson

- Introduces you to the structure, missions, capabilities, and limitations of the Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF)
- Helps you to understand the unique capabilities of the MEF

Why Study the MEF?

In addition to the fact that you may one day be a MEF commander, here are some other reasons you will want to study this organization:

- Understanding the roles, structure, capabilities, and limitations of the MEF is essential to knowing how the modern Marine Corps fulfills its national security missions.
- The MEF is the Marine Corps' premier force designed to be "small enough to get there, yet strong enough to win" battles in a joint or multinational arena.

Introduction, Continued

Relationship to Other Instruction

This lesson reinforces and expands on previous issues identified in service doctrine discussed in *Operational Level of War* (8803). It also introduces the **primacy** of the MEF as the warfighting MAGTF structure. Follow-on lessons will address capabilities, limitations, as well as planning and employment considerations of the MAGTF and MEF in greater detail.

The MEF as a warfighter is a major recurring theme throughout the remainder of this course. Understanding the MEF provides a firm foundation for subsequent courses that deal with planning, joint and multinational operations, MAGTF operations, amphibious operations, and operations other than war (OOTW).

This lesson is a component of the Marine Corps Command and Staff Program (8800 Program) and by direction of MCO P1553.4 is required of all Marine officers attending equivalent sister resident schools.

Study Time

This lesson, including the issues for consideration, will require about 2 hours of study.

Educational Objectives

Capabilities and Limitations	Understand the capabilities and limitations of the MEF in joint and multinational operations. [JPME 1(a)]
Military Operations	Understand how the MEF plans for and conducts military operations. [JPME 1(e) 3(a)]
_	Describe the basic difference in structure and employment considerations between an Army Corps and the MEF. [JPME 1(a)]
JPME Areas/ Objectives/Hours (accounting data)	=1 +1 +e

Concepts

National Security Act of 1947

In keeping with a long history of amphibious warfare, the National Security Act of 1947 assigned the Marine Corps to provide rapidly deploying expeditionary forces for contingency missions in support of the national strategy.

MAGTF

The Marine Corps met this responsibility with the MAGTF, which is a taskorganized, highly mobile, and integrated air-ground team supported by its own CSSE. The statutory mission of the MAGTF is to provide the Fleet Marine Force (FMF) with the ability to

- Seize or defend advanced naval bases
- Conduct land operations in support of naval campaigns
- Perform other duties as directed

MAGTFs' Common Characteristics

All MAGTFs share certain common characteristics, regardless of their size or mission, as shown in the table below:

Common Characteristics		
Readiness for expeditionary service	Logistic strengths and limitations	
Strategically mobile	Flexibility	
Capability for forcible entry	Tactical surprise	
Environmental versatility	Capability with naval, joint, and	
	combined operations	
Capability for independent action	Sea basing	
Sea-air-land coordination	Forward basing	

MAGTF Elements

The MAGTF includes the following elements under one commander:

- Command Element (CE)
- Aviation Combat Element (ACE)
- Ground Combat Element (GCE)
- Combat Service Support Element (CSSE)

Concepts, Continued

MEF

While sharing these characteristics with all MAGTFs, the MEF is the largest and most capable fighting forces of the MAGTF. It has no fixed structure, but is task-organized and designed to handle specific duties. The MEF may range in size from half the assets of a division and aircraft wing to multiple divisions and aircraft wings. The total number of Marines and Sailors in the MEF may range from 30,000 to over 60,000. Whatever the size of a combat force, it is supported by an appropriate CSSE.

MEF Missions

The MEF, operating independently or as a service component of a larger joint or multinational force, might include a wide-range of expeditionary operations such as

- Amphibious operations
- Assaults
- Raids
- Demonstrations
- Withdrawals
- Sustained operations ashore in any geographical environment
- Commitment as a follow-on reinforcement for a smaller MAGTF
- Operations in support of a maritime campaign, such as the seizure or defense of an advanced naval base
- Low-intensity conflict operations
- Counterinsurgency
- Terrorism counteraction
- Peacekeeping
- Peacetime contingency operations

Concepts, Continued

MEF's Versatility

The MEF's unique expeditionary structure gives it the ability to mobilize close to crisis areas without revealing its destination or intentions. It is large enough to operate independently when necessary or as a component of a larger force.

Fundamentals of MEF Operations

Fundamentals of MEF operations include

- Executes Commander in Chief/Joint Force Commander campaign
- Focuses at the operation level
- Integrates the MAGTF's warfighting capabilities
- Fights a single battle
- Controls the operational tempo
- Uses a single battle concept
- Deep operations
- Close operations
- Rear operations
- Operates as a single combined arms team

MEF CE

The MEF CE is comprised of the following:

- Commanding General
- Deputy Commander
- Executive staff
- Special staff
- General staff

Concepts, Continued

Comparison of MEF to the Army Corps

The MEF has many things in common with the Army Corps. Consider the following points:

- The MEF is similar in size to an Army Corps, but differs in mission and composition. The MEF is designed for specific duties and structured for independent operations for a short duration. The Army Corps is configured to operate with other forces for longer periods of time.
- As a MAGTF, the MEF is a balanced, self-sustaining force with an organic CE, GCE, ACE, and CSSE.
- Both the MEF and the Army Corps must assume the responsibilities of a Joint Task Force (JTF) and operate effectively as part of a multinational force.

Recent MEF Operations

The MEF has supported a wide variety of real-world operations in recent years. In addition to participation in Operations *Desert Shield* and *Desert Storm*, MEF units

- Supported the Dayton Peace Accords
- Enforced the United Nations' "no-fly" zone over Southern Iraq
- Rescued a downed U.S. Air Force pilot in Bosnia
- Processed refugees in Guantanamo
- Enforced the United Nations' sanctions against Serbia and Montenegro

Because of the MEF units' expeditionary structure, high state of readiness, and flexibility, they have proven ideal in the uncertain post-Cold War world.

Required Readings

The Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF) **Readings**

- Brennan, Robert (Maj., USMC). "The MEF as a Warfighter?" *Naval Institute Proceedings*, November 1994, pp. 36 to 38. Find this reading in the *Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF) Readings*, Annex A, pp. A-3 to A-5. Major Brennan discusses the future of the Marine Corps, particularly the role of the MEF in relation to C², maneuver, intelligence, aviation, fires, and CSS.
- Munson, Curtis A. (Maj., USMC) and Lyons, Dwight. "Who Fights the MAGTF?" Marine Corps Gazette, June 1992, pp. 2 to 4. Find this reading in the Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF) Readings, Annex A, pp. A-4 to A-9. Major Munson and Mr. Lyons state at the beginning of their article, ...our success at integrating the combat power available to I Marine Expeditionary Force (I MEF) was a material factor in the lightning war that smashed the Iraqi army and freed Kuwait. They show how the principles and concepts can be applied anywhere. They discuss close and deep battles and MEF commander's roles in each. They point out the importance of maneuver warfare principles in these battles and how to use them in the future.

FM/FMFRP Readings

FM 100-15, *Corps Operations*, chapter 1, "The Corps," pp. 1-1 to 1-5 and chapter 2, "Organization of the Corps," pp. 2-1 to 2-7. Find this reading in the *FM/FMFRP Readings* (8800), pp. 63 to 75.

- Chapter 1 discusses the role of an army corps as the link between the operational and tactical levels of war. It lists the critical roles of an army corps as the central point on the air-land battlefield where combat power is synchronized to achieve tactical and operational advantage over the enemy. It covers operational planning, tactical operations, and an Army Corps' role in a JTF.
- Chapter 2 covers the organization of an army corps.

Required Readings, Continued

FMFM Readings

FMFM 1-2, *The Role of the Marine Corps in National Defense*, pp. 4-7 to 4-9 and Appendix C, p. C-8. Find this reading in the *FMFM Readings* (8800), pp. 1 to 3. This reading covers the MAGTF commander responsibilities when committed to expeditionary service or exercises, operational missions, MAGTF organization, and readiness. Included in the reading is a short description of the Marine Expeditionary Brigades (MEBs) force and unit (DoD) while covering military capability, command, department, intervention, and strategy.

For Further Study

Supplemental Readings

The readings listed are **not** required. They are provided as recommended sources of additional information about topics in this lesson that may interest you. They will increase your knowledge and augment your understanding of this lesson.

- Joint Pub 1, *Joint Warfare of the Armed Forces of the United States* (1995), pp. 111-1 to 111-9.
- Joint Pub 3-0, *Doctrine for Joint Operations*.

Issues for Consideration

The Army Corps versus the MEF	Is the MEF capable of operating similar to an Army Corps? What sets MEF apart?
MEF Readiness	Can the MEF muster adequate manpower and equipment to be "relevant, ready, [and] capable?"
Is the MEF a Warfighter?	In view of the required reading article by Major Brennan, is the MEF really capable of being a warfighter?
A "Super" MEF?	Consider the possibility, impact, and consequences of the Marine Corps reducing to only one "super" MEF.
Army Corps and MEF	Compare and contrast a U.S. Army Corps to a Marine Expeditionary Force.